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Letter dated 22 December 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Spain and the United Kingdom, as Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, have the honour to transmit herewith a summary note of the meeting held on 7 December 2016 on women and peace and security in the Central African Republic (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Román **Oyarzun**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Matthew **Rycroft**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
of the United Kingdom to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 22 December 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security

Summary of the follow-up meeting on the Central African Republic, 7 December 2016

The meeting was attended by members of the Security Council and representatives of the United Nations Secretariat and agencies, funds and programmes. The main briefer was the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Deputy Head of Mission of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Diane Corner, accompanied by senior mission staff and heads of United Nations agencies.

MINUSCA provided updates on key developments since June. Close to 1,000 incidents of sexual and gender-based violence have been reported each month, and between June and December, 57 of those incidents were allegedly perpetrated by parties to the conflict. Armed actors continue to commit violence against women and girls accused of witchcraft, often with the goal of extorting money or controlling civilians in the territories under their control. In spite of the circular note issued in March by the Minister of Justice prohibiting the treatment of sexual crimes as a simple offence, widespread impunity and the frequent use of informal settlements in cases of sexual violence have continued. A recent positive example of the commitment of national partners is the establishment of a network of 10 mayors from Bangui and surrounding municipalities to raise the awareness of the population on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. While the rapid intervention unit of the police is not yet operational, the 29 staff members in the unit (including 13 women) have been appointed by the respective ministries and have received training, and the renovation of the building that will host the unit began in October.

An assessment conducted by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), in partnership with MINUSCA, was presented in late November with the goal of developing targeted assistance for women and girls who participate in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and in community violence reduction and developing areas of focus for awareness-raising for all participants, including HIV prevention, female genital mutilation, early marriage and prevention of sexual violence. As at 28 November 2016, 712 women and girls had participated in pre-disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities in nine locations throughout the country, representing close to 17 per cent of the total participants in the programme; 35 per cent of participants or beneficiaries of community violence reduction activities must be women and girls.

Women's organizations insist on the disarmament of all armed groups across the country before the upcoming local elections. In the most recent round of elections, several women candidates were prevented from campaigning by armed groups often associated with rival candidates. Women currently hold 12 out of 140 seats in parliament and 4 out of 23 ministerial positions, and only one woman heads a large public entity, the National Election Authority. However, in November 2016, the National Assembly adopted a gender parity law providing a 35 per cent quota for women in decision-making bodies of public or private organizations. Although the law has to be promulgated by the President, support from the international community for the adequate implementation of the law will be crucial.

In October, the Government of the Central African Republic acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In the lead-up to the donor round table in Brussels in November, the United Nations supported consultations of more than 700 women leaders in the 16 prefectures and ensured that their views were represented in the donor conference.

In response to questions from Security Council members, participants from Bangui and New York added the following:

- **Gender balance and mission capacity with regard to gender and the protection of women**. MINUSCA has made progress in the consolidation of its protection function, and in addition to its three current women's protection advisers, there are three advisors and nine focal points in the Human Rights Division focused on conflict-related sexual violence, as well as a gender advisory unit. Women constitute 24 per cent of all civilian personnel, and there are 14 women and 49 men at the P-5 level and above. As at 26 September 2016, women represented 1.5 per cent of the military component and 9.5 per cent of the police component, the latter number reflecting an increase over the last few months.

- **Conflict-related sexual violence**. Continued insecurity has hampered the implementation of the previous commitments of the former Government to address conflict-related sexual violence. In addition to stigma, one of the causes of low reporting is the lack of services for survivors, including police protection and transportation to access the services; most services are provided by non-governmental or community-based organizations. MINUSCA will publish the mapping results of major human rights violations since 2003, which is in line with the mandate of the special criminal court, and which will include a section on conflict-related sexual violence.

- **Accusations of witchcraft and human rights violations**. MINUSCA is preparing a report on witchcraft and continues to advocate its removal from criminal statutes, but there is a widespread belief in witchcraft in the country, including among the judiciary.

The Secretariat recommended that the Informal Expert Group continue to keep the Central African Republic on its agenda, that women's participation and representation in decision-making be emphasized in future meetings of the Security Council and interactions with the Government and that the Informal Expert Group liaise with the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning

the Central African Republic to ensure that its Panel of Experts continues to take allegations of conflict-related sexual violence or gross violations of women's rights into account when listing individuals and that it is provided with the necessary gender expertise. The Co-Chairs thanked the Mission and the country team for the quality of their briefing and requested that the information and analysis provided be better integrated into the periodic briefings and reports to the Security Council.